

Draft Large Tract Rural (L-T-R) Zoning Use District
Flathead County Zoning Regulations
March 11, 2010

Over the past year the Flathead County Planning and Zoning Office and Planning Board have been cooperating on the development of a new zoning use district for inclusion in the Flathead County Zoning Regulations. **The Large Tract Rural Zoning Use District (L-T-R) would not create any new zoning district on the ground but would be available in the zoning regulations for property owners to request and use when considering zoning for their property.**

L-T-R zoning is intended for use in areas of the unincorporated county where traditional uses include timber harvesting, agricultural production, mineral resource related activities and public outdoor recreation. These traditional uses often involve long hours and equipment operations that generate noise, heavy truck traffic and dust over large expanses of land. These traditional uses have historically been the backbone of the local economy.

For the most part these lands have traditionally allowed public access for camping, hunting, fishing, hiking, snowmobiling and other outdoor recreational activities which benefit the public. Maintaining and protecting the traditional uses on these lands is important to the local economy and custom of county residents.

Providing county and other public services, including emergency fire, sheriff and medical response, road maintenance, etc., to remote areas is more costly; costs which property tax payers' help pay for. While the district would protect and encourage the continuation of traditional resource related uses it recognizes that property owners may desire to subdivide and develop their lands in the future. L-T-R zoning is flexible and provides direction for development which would minimize incompatibilities with existing traditional resource use operations through appropriate site design. Public service delivery tax inequities would be off-set by encouraging development in areas close to existing public services.

L-T-R zoning proposes a base density of one unit per 40 acres. This unit would not be a minimum lot size but an average density where actual lot sizes could vary but not average more than one unit per 40 acres. Density unit increases would apply where public services are available close to the project site. Density unit increases would also be available for developments which cluster development and create open space in ways to mitigate conflicts with adjacent lands being used for traditional resource use operations. Additional density units could be moved into a project site by relocating development potential through the use of conservation easements from other areas within the L-T-R. The minimum area needed to create an L-T-R Zoning Use District on the ground is 320 acres.

Project sites containing 320 acres or more would be required to prepare an Overall Development Plan or ODP, although all projects are encouraged to take advantage of the ODP process. The approved ODP would act as a permanent zoning overlay and provide standards and requirements for development. An ODP includes a full analysis of the site and surrounding area, plan of action

and comprehensive environmental assessment to make sure any adverse human, physical and biological impacts are avoided or adequately mitigated.

L-T-R zoning incorporates multiple public involvement opportunities for review and input prior to making any land use decisions. Property owners requesting to be zoned L-T-R would need to apply and be processed, which includes two separate public hearings. Once a new L-T-R Zoning District is created for an area the traditional resource related uses and other permitted uses would continue without interruption. Conditional uses would go through public hearings before the Board of Adjustment. ODPs would follow the zoning district amendment process involving two separate public hearings similar to creating a new zoning district. Subdivision proposals would go through Flathead County Subdivision Regulation review, public hearing and processing.

The contents of L-T-R have been posted on the Planning and Zoning Department's website since February 18, 2010. Sample calculations and corresponding maps are also available for public review on the website.

On April 21, 2010 the Planning board will hold a public workshop to consider the Draft L-T-R proposal at the Earl Bennett Health District Building, beginning at 6:00 P.M. The public is encouraged to attend and provide input. Depending on the outcome of the workshop the Planning Board may schedule a public hearing to formally consider a Zoning Regulation Text Amendment to include L-T-R in the Flathead County Zoning Regulations.

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact the Planning and Zoning Office for assistance.